

HOW CAN WE BEST HELP OUR CAMPS
AND HOSPITALS?

STATEMENT

AND

CORRESPONDENCE,

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE

WOMAN'S CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

OF RELIEF,

NEW YORK.

NEW YORK:

WM. C. BRYANT & CO., PRINTERS, 41 NASSAU STREET, CORNER OF LIBERTY.

1863.

HOW CAN WE BEST HELP OUR CAMPS

AND HOSPITALS

STATISTICAL

STATEMENT

OF THE



STATEMENT, & c.

No. 10 COOPER UNION, }
New York, March 27th, 1863. }

The Woman's Central Association of Relief publishes the following letters from members of the Medical Staff of the Army, for the purpose of aiding those who desire to relieve the Army, to decide how they can do so most economically and advantageously.

Many organizations are calling for money and supplies to be used for this purpose. The interests of the Army, and of the Country, which relies (under God) on the health and efficiency of the Army, for its preservation from ruin, require that the people be kept informed as to the relative utility of these organizations, and thus enabled intelligently to select that channel for their bounty through which it will do the greatest amount of good to the soldier, with the least disturbance to military discipline and self-reliance. It may do more or less good, no doubt, if sent through any channel. But all the efforts of Government and private patriotism for the relief of the Army, are still insufficient. Destitution and suffering still exist at many points. Contributions of clothing, stimulants, medicines, and hospital stores of every kind, are still most urgently needed by our soldiers in camp and in hospital. This is inevitable, no doubt, in a war waged on so vast a scale, at points so remote from northern civilization, and under a military and medical organization not yet fully perfected in all its details. But it shows the necessity of carefully economizing the bounty of the people, and applying it to the best possible advantage. It imposes on every one the duty of inquiring seriously and

earnestly, in what way and through what agency, he can make his contribution, no matter how trifling, most productive of good. The most generous shipment of supplies is neither truly charitable nor truly patriotic, unless its precise destination and its mode of conveyance have been decided after anxious investigation and study. The country cannot afford to let the public bounty, however lavish, be dispensed carelessly and unsystematically.

Our Association, which has been in active operation since the first outbreak of the Rebellion, has received and is receiving a very large amount of Army supplies from the North and East. It has dispensed them to the Army through the Agents and Inspectors of the National Sanitary Commission, with which it is affiliated.

It is fully satisfied that the Commission, recognized by Government, and acting in harmony with its system, seeking impartially to relieve the National Army and Navy everywhere, without regard to state lines or sectional prejudices, and conducting its operations through trained experts, is, on the whole, decidedly the best and most economical channel through which the Army can be aided. Under this conviction, and with no object but the good of the Army, and of the country, it addresses this communication to the people, and especially to the women of the loyal North.

The letters herewith submitted were received in reply to the following circular addressed to about forty of the Army Medical Staff, the Surgeon-General included. The officers to whom it was addressed were, almost without exception, personally unknown to the writer. They were mostly selected as being in charge of important General Hospitals.

WASHINGTON, D. C., }
February 1863. }

To

U. S. A.:

Sir,—Having been from time to time interested in securing supplies to be sent to our sick and wounded soldiers, I am anxious to be able to answer judiciously the question often asked me, viz.: “*Through what established channel can supplies best be conveyed to the soldiers?*” The doubt of the people seems to be between—

1st. State Agencies.

2d. The U. S. Sanitary Commission.

3d. Individual Visitors and Dispensers.

Will you allow me the benefit of your large experience in your answer to the question, which one of these three, as shown by its practical working, is the best repository and distributor of the people's bounty, giving the greatest amount of good to the soldier, with the least interference with the Surgeons of the Hospitals?

Very respectfully,

Your obed't serv't,

W. H. HADLEY.

To this circular letter thirty-two replies were received, all of which are herewith submitted; of these, it will be found that twenty-four assert the Commission to be the best channel through which the People can aid the Army, five are undecided, or express a qualified approval, and three condemn the Commission as a failure, or express a preference for some other channel of supply. We have thought it best to submit them all, without omission, to the good sense of the People, in full confidence that the verdict of the people on the whole case, thus brought out, will be according to the weight of evidence.

The following considerations are suggested as likely to have been present to the minds of Army medical officers when fram-

ing their answers to Mr. Hadley's circular, and as deserving the attention of all who desire to promote the health and efficiency of the Army :

I.

Agents and Depots of the Commission are at every centre of military operations from Fredericksburgh to Port Royal, Vicksburgh and New Orleans. These Agents report regularly to its Central Office at Washington as to the wants of the Army at their respective stations.

The Central Office is thus enabled to overlook the whole field of operations, East, West, and South, and is kept informed from day to day not only of the *actual* but of the *relative* necessities of every camp and hospital.

It is thus enabled to use all the supplies received from the People to the utmost advantage, and to send them where they are most wanted and will do the greatest good to the greatest number.

No individual and no other organization possesses this advantage. They can never be sure that their benefactions would not do *more* good, relieve *more* suffering, and save *more* lives for the National defence, if bestowed elsewhere. Agents of the Commission often find camps and hospitals in absolute want, while others in their immediate neighborhood are overburthened with luxuries, injurious alike to health and to discipline, heaped on them by the wasteful unsystematic bounty of some wealthy community, on which they are supposed to possess a special local or provincial claim. Bounties thus bestowed injure instead of blessing both the receiver and the giver. They pamper and weaken the former, while the act of giving tends to blunt the National feeling and stimulate the sectionalism of the latter.

There can be no question but that fully one-half of the

People's voluntary contributions in aid of the Army, since the war began, has been wasted, because not systematically distributed by a central organization.

Other difficulties embarrass the operations of State and local agencies and render them less economical than those of the Commission. For instance, the transportation of supplies to hospitals or camps at points where active movements are in progress, or expected, is necessarily irregular and uncertain. All lines of communication with such points are monopolized by Government, and commonly tasked to their utmost for the conveyance of men, of ordnance, and of commissary stores. Cases consigned to particular hospitals, regiments, or companies, must wait. Unless there is some agent on the spot like those of the Sanitary Commission, whose special business it is to see that they are forwarded, who is responsible for their prompt delivery, who has special relations with Quartermasters and medical officers, and who understands how the work is to be done, such supplies are apt to wait indefinitely. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of dollars worth of cases and packages intended for the Army, have thus been wasted and lost.

II.

It is sometimes said, that unpaid volunteers are preferable to Relief Agents, regularly engaged, and paid like those of the Commission, and that the employment of such Agents by the Commission, and its expenditure of money in salaries, is an objection to its system.

A very slight acquaintance with the work these Agents have to do will suffice to correct this error.

When the Commission commenced its operations, it availed itself of all the volunteer aid it could secure. But it soon learned that volunteers were unreliable for permanent, system-

atic, and subordinate labor. It was compelled to abandon the volunteer system, and to require every one of its Agents and Inspectors to engage himself to the performance of specified duties, at a fixed compensation. The rates of compensation it adopted are so moderate that no one will enter its service except from motives that make up for the smallness of the pay it gives. But "business relations" between the Commission and its Agents have been found indispensable to secure subordination, responsibility, and punctual performance of duty. Many of them refund their monthly salary to the Commission, but the amount is received and acknowledged like any other donation of money.

On a sudden exciting emergency, as for instance, immediately after battles, like Antietam, or Fort Donelson, or the Seven days before Richmond, volunteers are easily secured by the score. Humane and patriotic gentlemen of leisure, surgeons who wish to see something of practice on the field, and to make their professional skill useful when so urgently needed, men who want a new excitement, and men who seek newspaper notoriety—all are ready and anxious to go forward with supplies, and to rough it on the field for a few days, or weeks, without fee or reward. Many offer themselves from the highest impulses of self-sacrificing patriotism and Christian charity. But they can not, as a general rule, be depended on for permanent duty, and the majority of them would soon weary of dispensing stores and aiding regimental surgeons, month after month, amid the mud and monotony of winter quarters. Yet, without the experience that can only be acquired by this very persistence in comparatively dull and common-place work, the volunteer relief agent is sure to do as much harm as good, no matter how excellent his intentions or how abundant the supplies at his disposal. For he cannot possess such practical knowledge of military usage, regulations, and system, as to be able to relieve sick or wounded men in camp or hospital without great waste and without serious injury to discipline and efficiency.

If he find a camp or hospital suffering for want of supplies, his natural impulse is to relieve it at once. Being, as a general rule, wholly ignorant of our military system, and of the duties that belong to Surgeons and Quartermasters, he does not stop to inquire (nor could he readily ascertain, if he did), whether these officials are or are not doing their proper work, and whether they can or cannot promptly obtain the needed supplies by requisition through the regular governmental channels. If they can be thus obtained, his proper course would obviously be to call the attention of the officers to their neglected duty, and reserve his own supplies for cases in which the official machinery has failed, as it often does, through misfortune and accident, leaving the men without remedy, except from outside assistance. No one can discriminate between these two widely different cases who does not possess practical familiarity with our complex system of Army regulations and usages, and this knowledge can be acquired only by practice and experience. And for want of this knowledge, many a volunteer relief agent who has returned from his fortnight of hard work, exposure, and fatigue, full of honest pride in the memory of help and comfort given to hundreds of sick and wounded men, has in fact been merely doing the work and covering up the shortcomings of some lazy or dishonest officer. The warm-hearted but inexperienced almoners whom the People have sent out to dispense their bounty, have thus unwittingly saved thousands of incompetent officials from exposure, dismissal, and disgrace. Agents like those of the Commission, permanently employed and experienced in their work, are in no danger of doing this mischief. They ascertain at once whether a destitute camp or hospital can be promptly relieved by the officers in charge of it. If it cannot, they supply its wants; but if it can, they render only such assistance as it may require, until relief is obtained from official sources. If the responsible officer be

inexperienced, they are qualified to advise and assist him, and if he prove to be incompetent or dishonest, they report the case through the Central Office of the Commission to the proper military authorities, and generally with results beneficial to the Army.

But the Amateur Relief Agent is not merely comparatively wasteful and inefficient in his labors, he is almost certain to inflict positive and serious injury on the discipline and *morale* of the Army. A regiment or brigade in active service is utterly and essentially unlike anything within the range of civil experience. Its efficiency against the enemy, its health, and its very existence, depend on its discipline, its subordination, and its thorough and exclusive reliance on its own military authorities for everything its men have or hope for. The mere presence of a single irresponsible civilian outsider within its lines, is an evil, necessary perhaps, but still a positive evil, reminding the men of what it is their first duty to forget, the pleasant possibility of freedom from a superior authority controlling their every act through every hour of the day. If this outsider be charged with the distribution of comforts and luxuries, and with the office of making up for the real or imaginary failures of their officers, on whom they ought implicitly to rely for every real want, he may most unintentionally and unconsciously become a centre of mischievous disaffection and disorganization. He is irresponsible and therefore lavish with his stores, while the Surgeon and the Quartermaster, being necessarily under strict responsibility to their superiors, and not inspired by the temporary enthusiasm of volunteers, seem by contrast niggardly with theirs. The rank and file, naturally inclined to find fault with their officers, and to magnify every ground of complaint against them, draw comparisons to their disadvantage; and their reliance on the military system, of which they are a part, is thus weakened, and with it their discipline and their value to the country.

The Commission has from the first been on its guard against this radical evil, that seems inherent in all efforts to aid the Army through outside agencies, that of the Commission included. It has sought to combine the *maximum* of benefit to the Army from the People's sympathy and bounty with the *minimum* of injury to discipline and subordination from outside interference.

Its agents are drilled and educated at its Central Offices (at Washington and Louisville), familiarized with the details of the Army system, and thoroughly impressed with the paramount importance of absolute subordination to military authority and military rule, before they are entrusted with duties in the field. Before entering on these duties, they are required to report to the commanding officer of every division, brigade, and regiment of the corps to which they are assigned, as well as to the medical officers in charge, and to put themselves under the orders of these officers, and receive their express authorization and approval, thus making themselves, as far as possible, a part of the National military organization. They are held to strict responsibility for the performance of definite duties. They are not allowed to ramble through camps and hospitals, dispensing comforts to pet cases of peculiar interest, or among soldiers from any one state or section. They are required to use the stores at their disposal to supplement any unavoidable deficiency in those of the Surgeons and Quartermasters of the National Army, to dispense them whenever practicable through these officials, to keep their own outside unofficial agency as far as possible in the back-ground, and to present themselves to the men as volunteer aids to their officers.

But it is unnecessary to dwell further on this point. It is self-evident that an army relief agent, with six months' experience of his duties, is better qualified to perform them than

an enthusiastic but inexperienced volunteer, and will perform them with less waste and greater efficiency. It is equally clear that experienced agents can be secured as a general rule, and on a large scale only by engaging and paying them, and thus training them for permanent, reliable, and efficient service. To prefer the service of unpaid amateurs is "penny wise and pound foolish." To supplement defects in the supplies of Government to the Army, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, is a large undertaking in a mere business point of view. No business firm or corporation would attempt a work of like magnitude through amateur agents, without special qualifications, under no control, subject to no authority, and withdrawing from their work without notice whenever fatigue, or pique, or private engagements might prompt them.

III.

The Commission was created by Government at the first outbreak of the rebellion, for the purpose (among others) of economizing, by *systematic* distribution, the spontaneous bounties of the people in aid of the National Army. It possesses peculiar relations with all Government officials, and especially with the Medical Bureau. Its Inspectors and Agents are recognized everywhere throughout our lines as entitled to the confidence of Government, and as the only almoners of the People's bounty, who are officially bound to uphold military discipline, and who work in strict conformity to military law. They, therefore, naturally enjoy peculiar facilities. They obtain orders for transportation of supplies, even when it is necessary to refuse them to State agents, and to the representatives of local societies. They have been confidentially informed in advance at what point a depot of supply could be most ad-

vantageously established for the benefit of the wounded in a battle about to be delivered, and have so acted on the information as to mitigate much suffering, and to save many lives.

It must be remembered that private charity, patriotism, and humanity, however munificent, do far less for our soldiers than Government is doing every day. The work of State organizations and local societies, and that of the Sanitary Commission itself, is insignificant, compared with that of General Hammond, the wise and energetic head of the Army Medical Bureau. The main dependence of our soldiers for protection against disease, and for care when in hospital, is on the National Government and its Medical Bureau.

The chief claim of the Sanitary Commission to public confidence and support is, that it works in strict subordination to that department of Government, and seeks to supplement temporary and accidental deficiencies in its system of supply and relief. Government is the soldier's best friend. Next best is an agency that co-operates with Government, and helps him by applying private relief as far as possible through the machinery of Government.

IV.

Unlike State agencies and local societies, the Commission distributes its stores with absolute impartiality among soldiers from every State. It studiously ignores all distinction between New Englanders, New Yorkers, and Missourians, and endeavors to discourage the work of the "State Agent," who lavishes comforts and luxuries on the Jerseyman or Rhode Islander in general hospitals, and turns away from the Vermonter or Pennsylvanian in the next bed. It holds such discrimination to be demoralizing to the people and to the Army, and to be merely a manifestation in milder form of the foul

spirit of sectionalism, that has brought upon us the calamities of civil war.

The existence of the Commission tends to nationalize the humanity and charity of the whole people, and through these their generous instincts, stimulated into such noble and unprecedented activity and beneficence during the last eighteen months, to intensify the feeling that we are one great Nation, and not a mere aggregate of States and sections; that our army is a National Army, and not a mere collection of State contingents. The Commission has done the country some service, in relieving the sufferings and saving the lives of its soldiers; still more in teaching the Army the importance of sanitary laws; but its highest office has been, and is, to NATIONALIZE the sympathy of the People with the sufferings and privations of the People's Army.

V.

Distribution of supplies is but a subordinate portion of the work the Commission is doing. Its Sanitary Inspectors are travelling from camp to camp, on the watch for abuses and neglects that impair health, and striving to correct them. Its "Special Hospital Inspectors," physicians of the highest professional standing, are visiting our military hospitals, and reporting their suggestions through the Central Office to the Surgeon-General.

Its Special Relief Agents watch over the waifs and estrays of the army; take care of discharged men who are without means to get home, of those who have been separated from their regiments by sickness or otherwise, and need assistance to rejoin them, and of individual soldiers requiring help, shelter, or guidance in any form. Its hospital directory system brings it into relations with the friends of sick and wounded soldiers

from Washington to Louisville. All these agencies are in constant regular communication with its Central Office. By this great organized system it is kept in close contact and sympathy with the whole Army in the field, and in hospital, at innumerable points, enabled more fully to understand its wants and more intelligently to relieve them.

Upon these considerations, and upon the testimony of the letters herewith presented to you, we submit that you will do most for the Army by contributing to its relief through the Sanitary Commission.

Miss L. L. SCHUYLER,
Miss COLLINS,
Mrs. T. D'ORÉMIEULX,
WM. H. DRAPER, M. D.,
SAMUEL W. BRIDGHAM,
GEORGE F. ALLEN,

*Committee on Correspondence
and Supplies.*

No. 1.

[Copy.]

SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,
February 13th, 1863. }

Sir,—In reply to your communication of the 11th inst., I am directed to inform you that the "Sanitary Commission is believed to be 'the best repository,' and distributor of the people's bounty; giving the greatest certainty of good to the soldier, with the least interference with the surgeons of the hospitals."

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

By order of the Surgeon-General,

C. C. BYNNES,

Assistant Surgeon,

U. S. Army.

Mr. W. H. HADLEY,

Washington, D. C.

No. 2.

[Copy.]

U. S. A. GENERAL HOSPITAL,
No. 1. }
FREDERICK, Md, Feby. 16th, 1863. }

Sir,—Yours of the 13th inst. has been received, and in reply would say, that the Sanitary Commission is the most reliable place through which you can send articles of comfort to the sick and wounded in the U. S. and General Hospitals.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

R. O. WEIR,

Asst. Surg. U. S. A.,

In charge of Hospital No. 1.

Mr. W. H. HADLEY,

Washington, D. C.

No. 3.

[Copy.]

"STONE" GENERAL HOSPITAL,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
Feby. 19th, 1863. }

Sir,—I am in receipt of your favor of the 11th inst., making inquiry as to the best mode of conveying voluntary contributions to the sick and

wounded soldiers. The agency of the Sanitary Commission is, in my opinion, the best. What has been received at this hospital during the past six months, from State agencies and individuals, amounts to nothing compared with what has been received from the Sanitary Commission during the same period.

I am, sir, respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

B. GLENNAN,

W. H. HADLEY,

A. A. Surg. U. S. A., in charge.

Washington, D. C.

No. 4.

[Copy.]

STANTON HOSPITAL, WASHINGTON, D. C., }
Feb'y. 12th, 1863. }

W. H. HADLEY, Esq.;

Sir,—In reply to your communication, dated 11th inst., I have to say that, as far as I know, both the "State Agencies" and the Sanitary Commission make judicious distribution of supplies for sick and disabled soldiers, contributed by private benevolence. With regard to private individuals, some do and some do not make judicious distributions. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think very favorably of the Sanitary Commission.

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

JOHN A. LIDELL,

Surgeon U. S. V., in charge.

No. 5.

[Copy.]

HEADQUARTERS SECOND DIVISION, }
U. S. General Hospital, }
ALEXANDRIA, VA., February 13th, '63. }

Sir,—Your letter of the 12th inst. is received. If your question, "Through what channel *can* supplies be best conveyed to soldiers?" read, through what channels *are* they best conveyed, there can be but one answer,—*"The Sanitary Commission."*

State agents are rarely seen in this Division. The charity of the societies seems to begin and end in feeding and clothing them, and that very poorly in some cases.

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servant,

T. ROTH SPENCER.

No. 6.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
McKIM'S MANSION,
BALTIMORE, MD., February 16, 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY, Esq. :

Sir,—I received your kind letter of the 13th. In reply, I have the honor to state, that the best mode to insure the proper distribution of such articles as you may send, might be to direct the box to myself, and I will hand it over to the Ladies of the North Baltimore Union Relief Association, who have two rooms at this hospital for their special use.

Thanking you for your kindness,

I am, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

LAVINGTON QUICK,

Surgeon U. S. Volunteers,

In charge of Hospital.

No. 7.

[Copy.]

GEN'L HOSPITAL,
FAIRFAX SEMINARY, VA., Feby. 13th, 1863. }

To W. H. HADLEY, Esq. :

Sir,—Your communication of the 12th inst., enquiring which was the better plan to furnish comforts to the sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals, was duly received.

The State agencies are addicted more to sight-seeing, than to relieving the wants of the sufferers.

The Sanitary Commission keep all things for an emergency. Individual visitors and dispensers would accomplish more towards actually relieving wants, or the various articles would be distributed more wisely and judiciously, if they were sent to the Surgeons in charge of the various Hospitals.

Respectfully,

DAVID P. SMITH,

Surgeon in charge.

No. 8.

[Copy.]

HEADQUARTERS GEN'L HOSPITAL,
DIVISION No. 3,
ALEXANDRIA, Feby. 14th, 1863. }

Mr. W. H. HADLEY,
Washington, D. C.:

Sir,—Your communication of the 12th inst. is received, asking my opinion in regard to the best channel for securing comforts to sick and wounded soldiers in Hospital, viz., State agencies, Sanitary Commission, and individual visitors. In reply, allow me to say, that I consider them all useful, and exceedingly important in their way, but distinct in their character, and, therefore, adapted to different purposes. While the State agencies are the best for meeting the wants of those who are under State authorities or in State Hospitals, the U. S. Sanitary Commission would be much more certain to meet the wants of the great army which are independent of State relations. Individual visitors are suited to special cases in special institutions, at home and abroad. All, or either of which, should ultimately meet the patient through the surgeon in charge, as well for the benefit of the patient, as the harmony and good order of Hospital.

EDWIN BENTLEY,

Surg. U. S. V.,

In charge.

No. 9.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
CONTINENTAL HOTEL,
BALTIMORE, Md., Feby. 16th, 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY:

Dear Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter of the 13th inst. You ask "Through what established channel can supplies best be conveyed to the soldiers?" I unhesitatingly answer, through the medium of the Sanitary Commission. During an experience of over fifteen months in the field, and on a number of battle-fields, and of over twenty-one months active service in hospital and field, I have had an opportunity to try, or to witness the workings of the three different plans of which you speak.

"Individual Visitors, and Dispensers." Their labors have been marked by a want of everything which would be desirable. Their means of supply have usually been limited, and their donations often partial, and their labors generally have been marked by a *want of fixed action and purpose*.

State agencies have been more fortunate; they have done much good;

but the great objection is, they are often partial in their distributions, supplying principally those from a particular State, and often travelling from place to place, under difficulties, to reach the troops of their particular State, and on their way passing thousands of Union soldiers, who were actually more in want of extra articles than those whom they so anxiously sought. I consider State agencies highly objectionable, that is for general good. There are in existence certain State agencies for specific objects, which are doing great good.

The Sanitary Commission, with its fixed branches penetrating to every part of the country, where the Army of the Union have gone, deals out its bounties liberally to the soldiers of any State, upon the requisition of a surgeon. During all my experience in field and hospital, I have found them *always* near, with a good supply of nearly all the necessities to make the sick and wounded soldiers comfortable, and they have always issued articles of food and clothing, upon my requisitions, with an alacrity worthy of such a humane institution. It is the most *economical, safest, surest, best* disciplined and conducted society. In short, it is the *only people's* and soldiers' reliance, outside of the service proper. Send all articles through the "Sanitary Commission."

Very respectfully yours,

Z. E. BLISS,

Surgeon U. S. V.

No. 10.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL, }
WEST'S BUILDINGS, }
BALTIMORE, Feby. 13th, 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY, Esq.:

Dear Sir,—I reply to your interrogations of the 12th inst. I beg to state, that, in my opinion, the Sanitary Commission is the most available and secure channel through which articles to soldiers can be distributed.

Very respectfully,

GEORGE REX,

Surg. U. S. Vols.,

In charge.

No. 11.

[Copy.]

LINCOLN GENERAL HOSPITALS,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
February 12, 1863. }

Mr. WM. H. HADLEY :

Sir,—In answer to your inquiry as to the best channel of the gifts of the people to reach the soldier, I would reply that I consider the Sanitary Commission to be the only reliable one. I have been very doubtful of the disinterestedness of many of the State agents, and I am certain that many of them, whatever may be their motives, do more harm than good, and the same might apply with perhaps more force to private individuals.

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

HENRY BRYAN,

Surg. U. S. Volunteers,

In charge.

No. 12.

[Copy.]

DOUGLAS HOSPITAL,
WASHINGTON, February 14, 1863. }

Sir,—In reply to yours of the 10th inst., I have to state, that, in my opinion, supplies cannot be more justly distributed than by the Sanitary Commission.

Very respectfully,

PETER PINEO,

Surgeon U. S. A.,

In charge.

W. H. HADLEY,
Washington, D. C.

No. 13.

[Copy.]

U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL,
ARMORY SQ. HOSPITAL,
WASHINGTON, Feb. 13, 1863. }

Dear Sir,—Dr. Bliss, being greatly pressed for time, has desired me to answer yours of the 10th. Regarding the distribution of articles, it is Dr. Bliss' opinion that, as a general thing, the Sanitary Commission is the best channel, as they dispense them where they are most needed, and without regard to States.

The State associations do not give but to those of their own State, which oftentimes causes an unpleasant feeling among the men—the sick and wounded not understanding why, when all are suffering, there should be any distinction. There are cases where individuals may also do great

good; but, as a general thing, it is important that all articles of food should be subject to the orders of the surgeons.

Dr. Bliss wishes me to add, that he is able at all times to procure from the Sanitary Commission, when they have the articles, whatever he wishes.

Yours respectfully,
J. W. PAGE.

No. 14.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
STUART'S MANSION,
BALTIMORE, MD., February 14, 1863. }

Dear Sir,—Your note of the 13th inst., inquiring as to the best channel through which supplies can be conveyed to our suffering soldiers, has been received. In reply, I would say that I consider the Sanitary Commission the most faithful and trustworthy, as well as the most generally available of the three methods of benevolence which you name. If any of your friends feel a peculiar interest in this hospital, their benefactions forwarded to me will be thankfully received. Those who simply desire to promote the comfort of our soldiers generally, in the highest degree, will do well, in my opinion, to make the Sanitary Commission the repository and almoner of their bounty.

I am, sir, Yours,

Very respectfully,

Dr. M. W. C. PETERS,

Asst. Surg. U. S. A.,

In charge.

To W. H. HADLEY, Esq.,
Washington, D. C.

No. 15.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
NEWTON UNIVERSITY, LEXINGTON STREET,
BALTIMORE, MD., February 17th, 1863. }

Sir,—In reply to your letter, making inquiry as to what medium I consider best through which to transmit the donations of generous people to soldiers, I must frankly say I do not feel myself competent to answer the question. I have received, for the soldiers under my care, so many comforts both in the field and in hospitals, I feel a delicacy in saying through which channel most gifts have been received. I must say individual dispensers do more good in the field than in hospitals. In the latter, it is difficult to impress on the minds of the generous the necessity of conveying their bounties through medical officers. When they do it,

I think their gifts the more readily reach the persons for whom they are intended. I, having been the recipient of so many bounties from the *Sanitary Committee*, and from State agents, do not feel able to decide as to which of them is the better channel through which to convey the bounties of the generous to needy soldiers.

Very respectfully,

Yours, &c.,

C. W. JONES,

Surgeon U. S. V., in charge.

To W. H. HADLEY, Esq.,
Washington, D. C.

No. 16.

[Copy.]

EMORY HOSPITAL,
February 13th, 1863. }

Mr. W. H. HADLEY:

Dear Sir,—Yours of the 10th inst. is received, and in reply I have to suggest that, in my opinion, but little is needed in the way of donations for either State Agencies or the “Sanitary Commission,” if the hospital is under proper management. However, I will state that my objection to the Sanitary Commission is, that it expends too much money in “Inspectors and Agents.” State societies are always hunting up *their own* soldiers; consequently, the most needy are very often overlooked by these State agents. Virginia has no aid society! Yet both these associations have done much good. This subject has occupied my mind for some time, and after a good deal of reflection, I believe that the best “repository and almoner” of the people’s bounty is the “State agencies.” I think it the most satisfactory to the patients. Supplies sent directly to the care of “Surgeon in charge” (when for hospital use), are certainly properly used and distributed. I cannot believe that there is one surgeon in charge of a hospital who would be so base as to misapply or improperly use supplies donated by the people for sick soldiers. An individual visitor, to effect anything, would have to give his time and attention exclusively to the work, and there would be the objection that the people would not know how to direct packages to private individuals. I honestly think the Sanitary Commission *would* be the best channel for conveying supplies, were it not that this association (*I think*) spend more money in looking after matters which unquestionably devolve upon the Surgeon-General, Medical Director, and the surgeons generally, than is used for the benefit of the sick, for whom it was donated. Congress has made provision for Hospital “Medical Inspectors.” It is (*I think*) the Surgeon-General’s business (through the Medical Inspectors under him) to keep

"posted" as to the management of hospitals, treatment (*medical*) of the sick and wounded, conduct of surgeons, &c., &c., but all these duties have been assumed by the Sanitary Commission. If the Sanitary Commission would only restrict their operations to the material wants (preparation and provision of proper food, quarters, and clothing) of sick soldiers, *I think* it would be *just what is needed*.

I am, sir,

Very respectfully,

W. CLENDENIN,

Surgeon U. S. V., in charge.

No. 17.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
PATTERSON PARK, BALTIMORE, }
February 14, 1863. }

Sir,—Yours of the 13th inst., in reference to the best mode of conveying comforts to our sick and wounded soldiers, is received, and in reply I am directed by the surgeon in charge to state that, as far as his experience is, the Sanitary Commission is the best established channel, or, if it is desired to send them to any particular hospital, the best way is to have them addressed to the surgeon in charge, and expressage paid.

Very respectfully,

Yours, &c.,

EDWIN SMITH,

Clerk.

To W. H. HADLEY,
Washington, D. C.

No. 18.

[Copy.]

ERUPTIVE FEVER HOSPITAL, }
KALORAMA, Feb. 13, '63. }

Mr. W. H. HADLEY,
Wash., D. C.:

Dear Sir,—I now reply to your inquiries, as to the best medium through which to dispense supplies to soldiers. I have to say that my experience of the manner in which such things have been done by the United States Sanitary Commission, leads me to favor that medium above all others.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

ROBERT S. THOMAS,

Surgeon in charge.

No. 19.

[Copy.]

ASCENSION GEN'L HOSPITAL, }
 WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 14th, 1863. }

Sir,—In reply to your note of the 10th inst., requesting my views of the best mode of “conveying supplies to our soldiers,” I would say that I have received largely of supplies through each of the different channels of which you speak, and I would further say, that while I do fully appreciate the great amount of good done through our State Agencies and private individuals, still I am of the opinion, that through our U. S. Sanitary Commission, so excellently organized, supplies can be more *economically* and *judiciously* distributed. I have usually been able to obtain of the Commission, upon a requisition, any articles I needed, and if they did not have what I wanted, they always have been willing to procure the same for me, if possible. I much prefer to receive my Hospital supplies upon a requisition, and than distribute them where they are needed, either by myself or by some one under my instructions, than to have them brought in by some one who does not know what the patients really need, consequently distributes them without discretion.

Very respectfully,

JAS. C. DORR,

Surg. in charge.

To W. H. HADLEY, Esq.

No. 20.

[Copy.]

MOUNT PLEASANT U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL, }
 WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 15th, 1863. }

Sir,—In answer to communication of the 11th inst., I beg to say that I have always considered the Agency of the Sanitary Committee as the best channel through which to disburse the generous and charitable donations of the sympathizing public,—for many reasons: the 1st, because it is more generally and favorably recognized by the Medical Corps of the Army, all know that the agency exists and stands openhanded to every applicant. 2d, Their supplies are more extensive, therefore we apply more readily to them, knowing we can get from them what perhaps State agencies have not. State agencies show so much partiality, that often harm is done instead of good, and private donations split upon the rock of inexperience and want of judgment. 3dly, Through the Sanitary Commission, *General Charity* is established—charity in its true sense, without partiality, without restriction, and which all (not this or that man in particular) deserve who have become inmates of our Hospitals, through a feeling that claims the aid of the North. There are many other reasons make me give the pref-

erence to the Sanitary Commission, for I know that any supplies furnished me by them, are to be delivered, according to proper judgment, to any or all our sick and wounded soldiers.

Very respectfully,

C. A. McCALL,

Assist. Surgeon U. S. A.,

In charge.

Mr. W. H. HADLEY.

No. 21.

[Copy.] H'D QRS. 1ST DIVIS. GEN'L HOSPITAL, ALEXA., VA., }
 "MANSION HOUSE," Feb'y 13th, 1863. }

Mr. W. H. HADLEY,
 Washington, D. C. :

Sir,—Your communication of the 11th inst., relative to the best means of distributing articles for the comfort of the sick and wounded in our Hospitals, is received.

In reply, I have to state that during an experience of nearly a year in the Gen'l Hospitals in this city, I have received visits from the agents of many State Soldier's Aid Societies, with the most of whom I was happy to meet, believing that their visits were prompted by an earnest desire to benefit the soldiers from their *respective States*.

From some of these Societies I have received very liberal donations; yet while I cheerfully accord to State Agencies, the credit of performing much valuable labor, candor compels me to give a decided preference to the Sanitary Commission, which, being a National Institution, pledged to attend to the wants alike of the soldiers of *all States*, I believe to be *the best* means by which the people's bounty may be distributed "with the greatest certainty of good to the soldier, and the least interference with the Surgeons in charge of Hospitals."

Very respectfully,

Your obt. servt.,

JOHN E. SUMMERS,

Surg. U. S. Army.

No. 22.

[Copy.]

HAREWOOD HOSPITAL,
February 15th, 1863. }To W. H. HADLEY, Esq.,
Washington, D. C. :

Sir,—In reply to your query desiring to know through what channel can supplies best be sent to the soldier, and pointing out the three usual agencies, Individual, State, and Sanitary, I would say that of these three I think the Sanitary Commission the most eligible, because it interferes least with the surgeon and works on the broad principle of serving the sick and wounded of the whole nation.

Yet I cannot see why these supplies could not be sent by express direct to the Surgeon in charge of a Hospital.

Respectfully,

THOMAS ANTISELL,
Surgeon in Charge.

No. 23.

[Copy.]

COLUMBIAN HOSPITAL, }
Feby. 20th, 1863. }

Sir,—I am very happy to have an opportunity to express my entire approval of the principles of organization, and the practical operations of the Sanitary Commission, as a means, as *the* only thoroughly official medium of distribution of the benevolence of the people to the soldier in the field or hospital. My own experience is, that the Commission is adequate to the work. That its basis of action is national, patriotic, and right. That the real wants of the soldier, of *all* the soldiers, are more completely supplied than can be in any other way. State agencies may possess a larger influence in stimulating and keeping alive the interest at home, and may secure larger contributions than could be otherwise obtained, but when it comes to distribution, the catholic principle of the Sanitary Commission, in recognizing only the soldier in the great cause of our country's salvation, and ignoring all State lines in the exercise of their beneficent labors, commands my entire and hearty approbation. Say to all who ask you, or to whom you have occasion to speak, that the labors of the Sanitary Commission are appreciated at all those points where the donations of the country reach the soldier, and that in no other way can they, can any, so aid the soldier, the country, the Government, as by keeping the hands and storehouses of the Commission full. I might expand this matter with writing many reasons for my opinion, but these reasons must be obvious at a glance. In regard to individual donations, I would say nothing to

encourage those giving directly to the soldier, which is the only method that will generally satisfy the contributors. Of course, donations of proper articles to the Surgeons or proper authorities are desirable, be the source of them what it may.

I am, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

T. R. CROSBY,

Surgeon U. S. V., in charge.

No. 24.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
Calvert Street,
BALTIMORE, MD., Feby. 14th, 1863. }

W. H. HADLEY, Esq. :

Sir,—Your polite note, with its appropriate inquiry, is duly received. The question asked is one quite difficult to answer, and I can only give you such reply as my own careful opinion will suggest. If it is erroneous or does not correspond with that of others, it is not because I have not taken pains to observe. As a rule, the Government is doing for the soldiers very nearly all that needs to be done. In a well conducted Hospital, the hospital fund, at present rate of rations, will amply provide not only the necessities but all the luxuries necessary for it, and so far as Hospitals are concerned, I am free and clear in the opinion that those who cheerfully pay their taxes at home, and sustain the Government by their influence, are doing about as much as they can do. Where there are Hospitals in towns, those who there reside can sometimes do much by means of Union Associations and private visitation to aid the dispositions of the Government, but even this to a limited extent, and more in the way of efficient cookery than in actual outlay. Reading matter, in the form of good and interesting books, is not very largely circulated to the Hospitals, and not at all by the Government, and this together with a few checker-boards and good games (not cards, &c.,) would be of service even in Hospitals in cities. As to soldiers in the field the case is somewhat different, but even these have not as many wants as at first, for the Government has had time to make liberal provisions, yet there still is room for help, and what kind of help is needed can only be found by actual observation. I do not believe that the affairs of most Commissions are conducted with that economy which becomes them as almoners of bestowed bounty. I know facts which are not pleasant or satisfactory. As to State agencies, I know but little. The best method is to furnish only those things which are never

furnished by the Army supply, and to have them disposed under the direction of the Chaplain, or some other reliable man of the regiment. I think that bounties dispensed without direction of reliable Surgeons, or some one to look after them a little, often do more harm to the patients than good. There has been an immense amount of wasted philanthropy in this war, but there is still room for the time.

I have the honor, sir, to be, with respect,

Your most obd't,

EZRA M. HAND,

Exec. Med. officer, in charge.

No. 25.

[Copy.]

HAMMOND GENERAL HOSPITAL,
POINT LOOKOUT, MD.,
February 17th, 1863. }

Mr. W. H. HADLEY :

Sir,—Your communication of the 12th, inquiring "through what established channels can supplies best be sent to the soldiers?" has been received. In reply, I would respectfully state, that supplies can reach the soldier through the Quartermaster's Department. For instance, a person at New York, desiring to forward stores for the use of the sick and wounded at this hospital, the box should be turned over to the Quartermaster for transportation; let it be addressed to the Surgeon in charge, in care of the quartermaster at Baltimore, who will be requested by mail to forward it to this point. But owing to the amount of work that this department has to perform at present, stores are sometimes permitted to remain in warehouses an unnecessary length of time. My experience has taught me that the most direct, prompt, and reliable method of receiving supplies, (through other than Government sources,) is from the U. S. Sanitary Commission. It is undoubtedly the best repository known to me, as is evidenced by its practical working. Its Agents are chiefly men selected with care, because of their integrity and business qualifications; and stores entrusted to them are promptly, honestly, and judiciously expended.

I cannot hesitate to recommend the Commission as proper dispensers of the people's bounty, in preference to any other channel known to me.

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servt.,

C. WAGNER,

Asst. Surg. U. S. Army,

In charge Hospital.

No. 26.

[Copy.]

FINLEY HOSPITAL, }
Feb'y. 14th, 1863. }

Sir,—I reply to your letter of inquiry of Feb'y. 11th, asking, "through what established channel can supplies best be conveyed to the soldiers?" I would respectfully say, my experience is decidedly in favor of the Sanitary Commission, which is now most admirably organized. A visiting Agent calls at my hospital once or twice a week, and gives an order for such articles as we may need, and in such quantities as their supplies will admit. Again, if I want anything I can get it by personal application at their office in the city. The supplies furnished by them during and after the battles on the peninsula, and at Harrison's Landing, were abundant and most opportune. In a word, I have never applied in vain to the Commission. As to State societies, I can give but little information, for I hardly know of the existence of them so far as any benefits arise to this hospital. I am decidedly opposed to individual visitors and dispensers—they generally do more harm than good. As a general rule, a few patients are selected, and on them luxuries are heaped, without necessity, and to the prejudice of others, to whom these very articles would be most suitable. Again, it is prejudicial to the harmony and good order of hospitals, to have these interferences with the orders and prescriptions of the surgeons. Where no distinction of states is observed in applying the luxuries supplied by the hospital fund, or Sanitary Commission, and where the welfare and comfort of all is equally provided for, and in fact nothing is lacking which the sick really need, I most decidedly condemn a system of *cramming by States*. I cannot tolerate any *disunion* in the efforts to do good, where all are engaged in a common cause, and if any preference were recognized, those who are greatest strangers, and farthest from their homes, should claim our special interest. There is but one true way; let all unite in their contributions, and from the general storehouse of each hospital let every luxury necessary for the sick and wounded be dispensed to our soldiers as to the children of a common parent and the defenders of the *United States*.

I am, sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

J. MOLES,

Surg. U. S. V., in charge.

WM. H. HADLEY, Esq.

[Copy.]

ECKINGTON GENERAL HOSPITAL,

February 13th, 1863. }

My Dear Sir,—Your favor of February 10th has just been received, and I will answer most explicitly all the questions you ask, stipulating at the same time that you receive my opinions only for as much as they are worth in your enlightened estimate. Your first question is, "Through what established channel can supplies be best conveyed to the soldiers?" To this I answer, through the United States Sanitary Commission; because—first, their means of conveying them to the points (often times remote) where they are most needed are far superior to any local association or State agency; second, because the best medical minds are engaged in the employ of the Sanitary Commission, and can, with sound judgment, estimate the real wants of our troops and supply deficiencies to infinitely better advantage than when the articles for issue are placed in the hands of persons, to say the least, whose enthusiasm is ahead of their judgment. Again, the National character of the Commission, and their magnificent contributions to ALL our suffering soldiers, has broken down almost entirely, and, if continued, will sooner or later eradicate the bitterness of feeling produced by neglect of men from one section of the country to pander to the unreal wants of those from another. The "State agent" from Maine deals out lavishly to the volunteer from his State supplies which are far more necessary for the Wisconsin man who lays by his side; and in this way good intentions are productive of evil fruits. I have not cited the example of the State of Maine for any invidious reason, but merely as an example of the pernicious influence of State agencies, unless most wisely and discreetly managed. Another and most potent reason for urging the claims of the Sanitary Commission as chief almoner in our cause, is the acknowledged fact that it possesses the undivided respect and confidence of the Medical Corps of both the regular and volunteer army; so far, at least, as my exchange of opinions with my brother surgeons goes. As to the effect of making "individual visitors" the agents for distribution of charities of this kind, my opinion, from a most thoughtful and hard-laboring experience, is decidedly against it; each individual visitor considers his or her own judgment the absolute arbiter of right in the premises, and unmistakeable evil has arisen from well meant but sadly indiscreet action from such persons. And here again arises the terrible effects of the State agency system; the individual has an eye single, no doubt, for good; still a report has to be made at *home* to a definite and often small locality, and the efforts of the individual are (if you call it so) unconsciously warped and biased to make this report most acceptable to such locality, and it is unwise to say the most agreeable report would be otherwise than that

"all our numerous supplies have been given to our own men." As to the efficiency and alacrity of the agents of the Sanitary Commission, little need be said; the country at large knows all—an appreciative community has long formed its estimate; but I still feel it a happy privilege to offer my testimony to the incalculable good which has been accomplished in the camp, the hospital, and the battle-field. I have served in all these, and what I say I know.

I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL A. STORROW,

Asst. Surgeon U. S. A.,

In charge Eckington Hospital.

No. 28.

Copy.]

U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL, CASPARI'S HOUSE, }
 CAPITOL HILL, }
 WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 12th, 1863. }

Sir,—In reply to yours of the 11th inst., I would state that of the three methods you name for dispensing supplies to sick and wounded soldiers, I think most favorably of State agencies. I am satisfied that the Sanitary Commission has signally failed. Individual "visitors and dispensers" are objectionable, because, unless accompanied by a medical officer in their visits to the wards, often inconvenient luxuries are distributed entirely regardless of the condition of the patients. Another objection is, individual visitors often contribute to soldiers from their own States only, thus causing much dissatisfaction among others. Even if articles are donated by State agencies for the exclusive use of the sick of their respective States, their distribution by the regular nurses would give to those who did not receive any the impression that they were articles more fitted for the conditions of those who did receive them, and not that a Pennsylvania soldier was passed by because he did not belong to the State of New York; and, moreover, the surgeon in charge could obtain articles from all the State agencies and distribute alike to soldiers of all the States at the same time.

This is my judgment, plainly stated, without knowing which of the three modes of distribution you represent, if either.

Very respectfully yours,

W. E. WATERS,

Asst. Surg. U. S. A.,

In charge.

No. 29.

[Copy.]

U. S. A. GENERAL HOSPITAL,
CHESTER, PA., Feb. 14th, 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY, Esq.:

Sir,—In answer to your communication February 13th, requesting information regarding the best means of dispensing charitable contributions for comfort of soldiers, I can only state that my experience is but limited.

All the contributions sent to this Hospital since the beginning of September, 1862, have been dispensed by my corps of female nurses, under the direction of their very efficient head, Miss Adeline Tyler.

From the Sanitary Commission I have received nothing, and needed nothing; nor do I know much of the working of that body (although an adjunct thereof), except by the printed reports. Individual visitors may be safely entrusted with supplies for the soldiers, but in no well regulated Hospital could they be permitted to dispense them, to any extent. The distribution should always be by persons under the control of the commanding officer. State agents have frequently visited my Hospital, but I have the men so well supplied, that but little room has been left for their usefulness, except in attending to a few individual requests, mostly regarding family affairs.

The Sanitary Commission would, therefore, seem to be the best agent for purposes outside of permanent Hospitals, and the authorities of the Hospitals in all others.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN L. LeCONTE,

Surg. of Vols.

No. 30.

[Copy.]

CAMPBELL HOSPITAL,
WASHINGTON, February 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY:

Sir,—In reply to your inquiry, "Of which is the best medium through which to dispense articles of comfort to the sick and wounded soldiers—1st, State Agencies; 2d, Sanitary Commission; 3d, Individual Visitors?" I would respectfully reply, that, in my opinion, articles of comfort come more directly to each individual soldier through individual visitors, from State agencies.

Very respectfully, your obdt. servt.,

J. H. BAXTER,

Surg. U. S. V., in charge of Hospital

No. 31.

[Copy.]

U. S. GEN'L HOSPITAL,
ANNAPOLIS JUNCTION, MD., }
Feb'y 24th, 1863. }

Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from you, dated Feb. 12th, 1863. I should have answered it before, had it not been for an unusual pressure of business.

In answer to your question, "Through what channel can supplies best be sent to the soldiers?" I would say that, in my opinion, if the supplies are meant for particular individuals, or persons from a particular State, they are more sure of reaching those for whom they are intended, by being sent to them through the State agency; but if intended for general distribution, the Sanitary Commission should be the first recipients of such supplies. When I have seen the need of a large supply of any article, not supplied through the regular military channels, I have invariably obtained it without difficulty from the Sanitary Commission, but I must also acknowledge that the State agencies have done a great amount of good, by visiting Hospitals, and finding out what articles of comfort individuals most desired. The plan, however, of individual *dispensers* I do not at all like, as articles deleterious to the sick would frequently be given them, unless the dispenser was invariably accompanied by the surgeon, which could not always be the case. In conclusion, I would say that I like both plans which I have specified, and should be sorry to see either of them dispensed with, as I think they should be made auxiliary to each other. The interest you take in this matter is a source of gratification to me, for, although I am confident that our Military Hospitals will compare favorably with those of any other country, and although the people of this country have taken an interest in them, greater than have the people of any other country in similar institutions, yet much remains to be done before our sick and wounded soldiers can be made as comfortable as they deserve. It is a matter in which surgeons are interested as much as the public, and the two should act in harmony with each other. I will not allow interference in matters connected with my Hospital, but am always grateful for any assistance which will be for the benefit of the patients. Any assistance which I can afford you in reference to this object will be cheerfully given.

I am, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obdt. servant,

(Signed)

GEO. A. WHEELER,

Ass. Surgeon U. S. Vols.,

In charge.

To W. H. HADLEY,
Washington, D. C.

No. 32.

[Copy.]

U. S. ARMY GENERAL HOSPITAL,
GEORGETOWN SEMINARY,
Feb. 22d, 1863. }

WM. H. HADLEY, Esq.:

Sir,—In reply to the interrogations contained in yours of the 11th inst., I would state that an experience of many months has proved to me that State distinctions have done, and are still doing much harm in the army. Consequently, "individual visitors and dispensers" who observe these distributions do more harm than good.

The same objection holds good in regard to State agencies, when they confine their bounties strictly to their own volunteers.

Any society, or agency, established for the relief of the sick of our arms, should, in my opinion, cast their contributions into one common stock, to be distributed to any suffering soldier who needs the articles which may have been provided.

The Sanitary Commission, which is such a depository, from which supplies and delicacies can be obtained simply by asking, is *by far the best channel through which supplies can be conveyed to the wounded and suffering.*

The evils of keeping up State distinctions are so glaring, and are doing so much harm, that I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing myself freely on this subject. The Pennsylvania or Ohio volunteers are not supposed to be fighting for the virtues of those States alone, but belong to one grand army, whose object is to suppress this unholy rebellion, and to restore to us peace and Union, and, if successful, each State from Maine to Georgia will be alike benefitted.

I have seen Ohio ladies go into a ward filled with wounded after the last Bull Run fight, for the purpose of distributing delicacies, and pick out the soldiers from their own State, without even a kind word to those of other States. Is this right? No, sir. Set your face against such distributions, as I have, and ever will while this war lasts, and if you have a loaf to give, let all share alike. The Ladies' Aid Societies, established in the different towns in the Eastern States, have done more for the sick and suffering than even the Sanitary Commission, (I speak comparatively.) I have repeatedly received boxes filled with delicacies and clothing, with instructions to distribute them *as most needed*, and a call for further supplies has always been met immediately.

What would you think of a surgeon who would go into his wards after a battle, and pick out the soldiers from his own State, and administer first to their necessities? Would you not say that such a man should be instantly dismissed the service? Would such a thing be tolerable for a moment? In many cases nourishment and clothing are more needed than

medical and surgical aid, and if distinctions are wrong in one case, they are equally so in the other, yet it has been done.

I entered the army to do my duty to the whole, and am a Pennsylvanian, yet I know no distinctions. All suffer alike, and will ever receive at my hands like attentions. Some patients are more attractive in their manners than others, and it is hard sometimes to refrain from showing preferences, yet I have always striven against it, and, I think, succeeded. Your letter did not perhaps call for all I have said, but you will forgive me if, in my enthusiasm to urge upon others, what I believe to be right, I have said anything out of place.

Respectfully,

H. W. DUCACHET,

In charge of Hospital.

NOTE.

While the preceding pages were in press, the two following newspaper articles appeared. They are reprinted as throwing some additional light on the subject matter of this paper.

The first is a communication to a Milwaukee newspaper. Its author is unknown, but it is evident that he is or has been a member of the Medical Staff of the Army.

The second is the report by a Lowell newspaper, of remarks made by General Butler at a meeting of citizens of Lowell, as to the operations of the Sanitary Commission in the Southwest.

1. COMMUNICATION TO MILWAUKEE PAPER.

THE NATIONAL SANITARY EFFORTS.

Mr. Editor: In listening to the lecture of Captain Bellows last evening, my feelings reminded me very much of the stories of the old war-horse, which would rush back to battle on the sound of the drum or the roar of artillery. I was reminded of so much of what I had seen, that I felt much like telling my own experience with the National Sanitary Commission:

When I went to the field I found a large proportion of the surgeons, for some cause which I have not learned, opposed to that Commission. It, of course, took me but a little while to become strongly prejudiced and bitterly opposed. Every agent sent to inspect us was made the subject of not very flattering remarks. Every pamphlet which they issued was hypercriticised. Last winter a number of surgeons met me in my tent—the Commission soon became our subject—something must be written against it, and I must write it. I was full of the subject and threw into my article all the force I could command. Just as I was finishing it the sound of artillery came booming over the land; heavier and heavier grew the roar—couriers arrive—a battle is fought at Drainesville. The surgeons dispersed to collect appliances for the wounded. The sufferers in the battle began to arrive. We had scarcely anything they needed. The noise of the battle had been heard in Washington, and by the time the wounded were undressed in came those Sanitary agents with the very articles of comfort which the Government had failed to supply. I laid the article I had written in my trunk, thinking I would finish it "at a more convenient season."

Time passed on, and we found ourselves on the Peninsula. In the haste of moving, most of the appliances of comfort had been left behind. For weeks we were almost wholly destitute of medicines, or any articles of diet for the sick. The battle of Lee's Mills commenced on the 10th (I think) of April, and continued through the next day. What should I do? I was almost without medicine, notwithstanding that from day to day I had been striving for weeks to procure it. But just then was discovered a number of "those sanitary chaps, who are prying into everybody's business." Somehow or other, they had the very things we needed. That night, after having finished my labors with the wounded, I went to my trunk, took out the article "on the Sanitary," read a few lines. It did not read as well as I thought it would; so I raised a garment and put it under, where it would not stare me in this face every time I looked in.

The battle of Williamsburg followed, and before the smoke of the battle had blown away, right alongside of our army lay one of those ever present Sanitary steamers, freighted not only with necessities but with luxuries for the sick and wounded. They had only to be asked for, and they were distributed without limit. Another shirt was thrown over my article to "Mr. Editor."

I was in charge of Liberty Hall Hospital at the time of the battle of Hanover Court House. Here both the sick and the wounded were crowded on me. Five hundred were piled in at one time. I had not a bed, not a dozen blankets, not a cooking utensil, and nothing to cook. In vain did I appeal to the medical director, in vain did he appeal to higher authority. The necessities of life, even, were not to be had. I begged, I plead—no use. In a few days after the battle, on the breaking up of other hospitals, the wounded who could not be sent to a distant hospital were sent to me, and some of them in the most loathsome condition, their wounds gangrenous, and alive with worms. Again I appealed for means of comfort, and now with such importunity that I was threatened with dismissal from the service. I procured a pass to White House, twenty-four miles away. There I found the Sanitary boats. I told the Commission the story of the soldiers' suffering. Hundreds of clean sheets, blankets, bed sacks and pillows were packed in less time than it needs to read this article. Boxes of condensed milk, farina, army soup, tea, coffee, sugar, oranges and lemons, were sent off with astonishing celerity. When I departed, there was not a State represented in that hospital but found an article which bore the marks of his home. New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, all were there, both with their soldiers and contributions.

As I led one poor fellow, from Pennsylvania, to his bed, and he read upon a cover of the clean white sheet the name of both his family and home, the convulsive sobs with which he shook that building, could they have been heard in the streets of Milwaukee, would have shook coppers from heads which now spit venom at the soldiers. That whole hospital wept, and as I took my paper and put it in the very bottom of my trunk, I noticed that somehow, a few watery spots had fallen amongst the lines.

On the retreat, in the seven days' fight, every mile of the march gave evidence of a presence, which moved in its charities always ahead of the Government.

The army arrived at Harrison's Landing. The sick had been sent ahead of us. In this connection I state but a single case in illustration. A young man from Milwaukee, in whom I felt a great interest, was found, after a long hunt, in an ambu-

lance. He was spitting black bile, and had all the symptoms of an approaching attack of yellow fever. Government transports were at the wharf, taking in the wounded. I had the ambulance driven to the river, and asked a place for this young man. It was denied, the transports were only to take the wounded. "But he is in more danger than hundreds of wounded." "Our orders are peremptory. We take only the wounded." Thirty hours here would be certain death. What could I do? I succeeded in getting to a transport which the Sanitary Commission had. I appealed to them. "We have only two hundred and forty on board—we will take him." He was sent to his home. And does the mother of that young man ever enter the Sanitary Rooms without shedding tears of joy and thankfulness to that Commission?—without feeling that the means for furnishing the conveyance were, perhaps, drawn from the funds of other States? I pass over other scenes of suffering relieved which I witnessed at Centreville, at South Mountain, Crampton's Gap, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. At Antietam, I took the paper from the bottom of my trunk, and, lest I might see it again, I burned it, and now declare on my word of honor, that I never wrote it, and that I never will do so again.

SCRIPSI.

2. REMARKS OF GENL. BUTLER AT LOWELL.

Genl. Butler, without further introduction, came forward and said :

"I am happy, my fellow-citizens, to bear testimony, from personal knowledge, to the efficient, economical, charitable, and kindly aid [received by the soldiers in the Department of the Gulf from the Sanitary Commission : and I am very glad to unite with you in aiding that most noble charity, which I believe, has been efficiently administered everywhere. Certain it is, I do know that it has alleviated much suffering in the hospitals and among the sick in the Department of the Gulf. Its charities there were of immense value to us ; and to it, for its many features worthy of commendation, is to be awarded the praise of that Department, as well as that of many others, I doubt not. But of this I speak from knowledge that no soldier wanted the proper medical attendance and comforts of the hospital during my command there ; and therefore I say again, I am glad that from the patronage which this charity has received here, the Commission will obtain very material aid."

